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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	AIT-03	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	PERC-00
	DS-00	OIGO-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	VCE-00	DCP-01	NSAE-00	IRM-00	DSCC-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00

/004W

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6534
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
AIT TAIPEI 0689
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
AMCONSUL SHENYANG
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 001290

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV, EAP/CM, AND EAP/RSP-TC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/07

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [CM](#) [VM](#) [CVR](#) [APEC](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM, THE PRC, AND TAIWAN
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[1](#)1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR RAYMOND BURGHARDT,
REASON: 1.5 (D).

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY. VIETNAM HAS HAD AN OFTEN-TORTUOUS HISTORY WITH CHINA, INCLUDING WITH THE PRC, AND IS AWARE OF THE DISPARITY OF THE IMPORTANCE WITH WHICH THE TWO COUNTRIES VIEW ONE ANOTHER. MANY HERE MINIMIZE ACKNOWLEDGING THE PRC AS A POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC MODEL (ALTHOUGH IT IS). RELATIONS WITH BOTH BEIJING AND TAIPEI ARE NOW BACK ON TRACK. THE SOUTH CHINA SEA IS SEEN AS VIETNAM'S GREATEST EXTERNAL SECURITY THREAT, IF NO LONGER AN IMMINENT ONE. VIETNAM WATCHES WITH INTEREST AND CONCERN EVENTS IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT, RECOGNIZING THE POTENTIAL FOR REGIONAL INSTABILITY THAT WOULD AFFECT VIETNAM. WHILE FORMALLY COMMITTED TO A POLICY OF "ONE CHINA," VIETNAMESE LEADERS PROBABLY DO NOT CARE DEEPLY ABOUT WHETHER REUNIFICATION EVER TAKES PLACE, AS LONG AS THE TWO SIDES CONTINUE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH VIETNAM. SEPTEL WILL EXAMINE ECONOMIC AND OTHER RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (C) VIETNAM'S SHORT-, MID-, AND LONG-TERM INTERESTS ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON AN INCREASINGLY COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRC, ON AVOIDANCE OF TERRITORIAL CONFLICTS WITH THE PRC IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AND THE LAND BORDER, AND ON PEACE AND PROSPERITY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE TAIWAN STRAIT. YET ONLY A DECADE AGO, THE GVN WAS BARELY ON SPEAKING TERMS WITH THE PRC, GIVEN LINGERING ENMITY OVER THE 1979 BORDER WAR AND
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STAUNCH DISAGREEMENT OVER VIETNAM'S OCCUPATION OF CAMBODIA. IN THAT SAME ERA, THE GVN HAD ONLY FLEDGLING UNOFFICIAL TIES WITH TAIWAN, NOW PROBABLY VIETNAM'S LARGEST INVESTOR. (TAIWAN DID NOT OPEN ITS "UNOFFICIAL" OFFICE HERE UNTIL 1993; ITS TIMING PROBABLY HAD SOME CONNECTION WITH THE EXPECTED LIFTING OF THE US TRADE EMBARGO.) CHINA SCHOLARS HERE HAVE SAID THAT IT NEVER OCCURRED TO HANOI TO SEEK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN DURING THE NADIR OF VIETNAM/PRC RELATIONS IN THE 1980'S, NOR EVEN TO COURT UNOFFICIAL TIES UNTIL SEVERAL YEARS AFTER THE DOI MOI PERIOD BEGAN.

HISTORY HURTS

[1](#)4. (C) VIETNAMESE FREELY ADMIT THE PERVASIVE

SOCIETAL, CULTURAL, AND LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE OF CHINA'S THOUSAND-YEAR OCCUPATION OF THE NORTHERN PARTS OF WHAT IS NOW VIETNAM. OFFICIAL HISTORIES, HOWEVER, ALSO TEND TO HIGHLIGHT THE VALIANT AND EVENTUALLY SUCCESSFUL VIETNAMESE EFFORTS TO WARD OFF CHINESE AGGRESSIONS, BOTH IN THE "REGAINING" OF INDEPENDENCE IN THE MID-TENTH CENTURY A.D. AND IN SUBSEQUENT CHINESE INVASIONS THROUGH THE 15TH CENTURY. MANY VIETNAMESE TALK ABOUT THIS HISTORY AS IF IT WERE FRESH IN THEIR MEMORIES RATHER THAN EVENTS FROM VIETNAM'S SOMEWHAT MYSTIC PAST; IT WOULD APPEAR THAT A THINLY VEILED RESENTMENT OF THE BIG DRAGON TO THE NORTH IS DELIBERATELY INCULCATED IN VIETNAMESE STUDENTS. THE SLIGHTS AND MISFORTUNES SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF THE CHINESE PLAY WELL INTO

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VIETNAM'S NOTABLE VICTIM MENTALITY, WHICH ALSO EVIDENCES ITSELF WHEN TALKING ABOUT FRENCH COLONIALISM AND THE "AMERICAN WAR."

15. (C) IN MORE RECENT HISTORY, VIETNAMESE ARE OFTEN PRICKLY WHEN PEOPLE MAKE COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE PRC'S SUCCESSFUL MODERNIZATION SINCE 1978 AND VIETNAM'S STILL MORE MODEST DOI MOI SINCE 1986. THEY ARE CORRECT IN ASSERTING THAT VIETNAM'S OWN COURSE IS TAILORED TO ITS UNIQUE NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS, WHILE NONETHELESS EXPRESSING ADMIRATION FOR THE PRC'S SUCCESSSES. THEY WILL ADMIT PRIVATELY TO WATCHING CLOSELY POLICY DEBATES WITHIN THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (CCP) -- MOST RECENTLY, ON THE TENDENTIOUS TOPIC OF ADMISSION INTO THE PARTY OF CAPITALISTS -- AND THERE IS LITTLE IF ANY DOUBT THAT DOI MOI WAS INITIALLY GRAFTED FAIRLY DIRECTLY FROM DENG XIAOPING'S EARLIEST REFORM. YET DENGIST THEORIES AND THOUGHT -- MUCH LESS MAOIST WRITINGS -- RECEIVE SCANT ATTENTION IN VIETNAMESE IDEOLOGICAL TRAINING (STILL A MUST FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AS WELL AS FOR ADVANCEMENT WITHIN THE

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	EPAE-00	DSCC-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/003W		

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R 210705Z MAY 02
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6535
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
AIT TAIPEI 0690
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU
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CIVIL SERVICE). THE FOCUS REMAINS INSTEAD HEAVILY ON A COMBINATION OF TRADITIONAL MARXIST/LENINIST THEORY AND HO CHI MINH THOUGHT.

FELLOW TRAVELERS OF TWO SORTS

16. (C) SINCE RELATIONS WITH THE PRC HAVE IMPROVED IN THE 1990'S, VIETNAM HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE SOLIDARITY OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES AS A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE NOW CLOSER TIES BETWEEN BEIJING AND HANOI. THERE ARE A STEADY STREAM OF PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS, AND IT WAS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE PRC WAS ONE OF THE FIRST COUNTRIES THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM (CPV), NONG DUC MANH, VISITED AFTER TAKING OFFICE IN 2001. (WE HAVE HEARD OF NO PLANS FOR HIM TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES, FOR EXAMPLE, DESPITE THE 2001 ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE US-VIETNAM BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT.) ONE VIETNAMESE CHINA EXPERT NOTED THAT VIETNAM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRC IS "MOSTLY IMPORTANT ON A POLITICAL LEVEL," SINCE

ECONOMIC AND TRADE TIES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE FAR MORE MODEST THAN WITH THE U.S. OR JAPAN. BEIJING'S AMBASSADOR HERE, NOW ON HIS THIRD TOUR IN VIETNAM AND A HANOI UNIVERSITY GRADUATE, MAY BE THE MOST FLUENT VIETNAMESE SPEAKER IN THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS.

17. (C) YET AS THE VIETNAMESE HAVE TURNED MORE TO A MARKET-STYLE ECONOMY, HANOI HAS ALSO BEEN KEEN TO COURT TAIWAN AND TAIWANESE INVESTORS. IT NOW MAINTAINS A LARGE AND SURPRISINGLY ACTIVE "UNOFFICIAL" OFFICE IN
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TAIPEI, HEADED BY A SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICER. IN ADDITION TO TRADE WORK, THE ELEVEN VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES AT THE OFFICE ARE PARTICIPANTS AT CHINA-WATCHING ACTIVITIES AT TAIWAN "GOVERNMENT-RUN" THINK TANKS. THE TAIPEI ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL OFFICE (TECO) IN HANOI IS MUCH SMALLER, AND WITH NO FLUENT VIETNAMESE SPEAKERS ON ITS STAFF, BUT OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED THE AGGRESSIVENESS OF TECO STAFF IN SEEKING CONTACTS AND INFORMATION HERE. THE DIRECTOR WHO LEFT EARLIER THIS YEAR HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN THE HEAD OF TAIWAN'S MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT. THE TAIWAN TRADE MINISTER, ACCOMPANIED BY A LARGE ENTOURAGE OF BUSINESS LEADERS, USUALLY VISITS VIETNAM EVERY YEAR.

THREAT LEVEL

18. (C) ACCORDING TO ONE VIETNAMESE ACADEMIC SPECIALIZING IN CHINA STUDIES, "THE US AND VIETNAM ARE THE TWO COUNTRIES THAT ARE MOST CONCERNED WITH CHINA." (IN CONTRAST, VIETNAM IS PROBABLY NOT EVEN IN THE TOP FIVE OR TEN OF BEIJING'S CONCERNS, THEY ADMIT.) DESPITE THE SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF THEIR LAND BORDER DEMARCATION IN 1999, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TONKIN GULF MARITIME BORDER AGREEMENT HAS BEEN DELAYED BY DIFFICULTIES IN REACHING AGREEMENT ON FISHING RIGHTS. BOTH THE LAND AND MARITIME AGREEMENTS GENERATED LEADERSHIP CONTROVERSY HERE, POSSIBLY CONTRIBUTING TO LE KHA PHIEU'S EARLY REMOVAL AS PARTY LEADER LAST YEAR. THE AGREEMENTS ARE FAVORITE TARGETS OF CRITICISM BY OVERSEAS VIETNAMESE AND SOME INTERNAL ACTIVISTS.
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ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL CHINA WATCHERS HERE, CONFLICTING CLAIMS IN WHAT THE VIETNAMESE REFER TO AS THE "EAST SEA" -- COMMONLY KNOWN ELSEWHERE AS THE SOUTH CHINA SEA -- REMAINS THE "BIGGEST SECURITY PROBLEM" FOR VIETNAM. ONE OBSERVER CLAIMED THAT "YOU CAN'T SAY IT WILL NEVER BE RESOLVED," WHILE ADMITTING THAT SUCCESS IN THIS ENDEAVOR MIGHT WELL NOT TAKE PLACE IN HIS LIFETIME.

19. (C) ANOTHER ACADEMIC POINTED TO THE INHERENT DIFFICULTIES IN SEEKING RESOLUTION EVEN IN AN ASEAN FRAMEWORK, AS NOW SEEMS TO BE THE HOPE. SOME OBSERVERS -- BUT NOT MANY -- HAVE OPINED THAT US OR JAPANESE INVOLVEMENT IN THIS ISSUE COULD SPEED ITS RESOLUTION. IN ANY EVENT, FEW CHINA WATCHERS HERE PUT THE RISK OF ARMED CONFLICT OVER THE EAST SEA AS HIGH, AND NOW (UNLIKE SEVERAL YEARS AGO) ASSUME THAT BEIJING AND HANOI WOULD NOT ALLOW ISOLATED INCIDENTS AS MIGHT TAKE PLACE TO ESCALATE INTO LARGER CONFLICT OR JEOPARDIZE BILATERAL TIES.

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FBIE-00 VC-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 VCE-00 NSAE-00 IRM-00
DSCC-00 NFAT-00 SAS-00 /003W
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R 210705Z MAY 02
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6536
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
AIT TAIPEI 0691
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
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110. (C) WHILE CLOSELY WATCHING THE SITUATION IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT, CHINA EXPERTS IN VIETNAM RATE THE THREAT LEVEL TO VIETNAM AS FAR LOWER THAN THE EAST SEA ISSUE. THEY ACKNOWLEDGE, HOWEVER, THAT ANY TENSIONS OR CONFLICT IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT WOULD NECESSARILY AFFECT SHIPPING IN THE REGION, AND HENCE VIETNAM'S ABILITY TO PURSUE EXPORT-LED GROWTH.

ONE CHINA -- DO WE CARE?

111. (C) WHILE REGULARLY AND OPENLY EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR "ONE CHINA," VIETNAM PROBABLY DOES NOT CARE DEEPLY ABOUT WHETHER OR WHEN THE TWO SIDES REUNIFY, AS LONG AS THEY AVOID OPEN CONFLICT, CONTINUE THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIES WITH EACH OTHER -- AND WITH VIETNAM -- AND DO NOT POSE A THREAT TO REGIONAL TRADE AND SECURITY. MOST OBSERVERS HERE SEE THE PRC AS BEING INCREASINGLY "FLEXIBLE" IN ITS APPROACH TO TAIWAN. SOME, HOWEVER, EXPRESS GROWING DOUBT THAT THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF MAINLANDERS HAS THE SAME ZEAL FOR REUNIFICATION AS THEIR ELDERS.

112. (C) GVN POLICY ADVISERS CLAIM THAT VIETNAMESE LEADERS NEVER OFFER OPINIONS TO BEIJING OR TAIPEI ABOUT REUNIFICATION (DESPITE VIETNAM'S EXPERIENCE WITH ITS OWN REUNIFICATION). CHINA WATCHERS HERE SO FAR DO NOT EXPECT ANY SURPRISES ON TAIWAN POLICY -- OR OTHER POLICIES -- IN BEIJING EVEN AFTER PRESIDENT JIANG ZEMIN STEPS DOWN; THEY USUALLY STRESS WHAT THEY SEE AS THE COLLECTIVE PRC AND CCP LEADERSHIP, WHICH MITIGATES

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AGAINST BOLD OR EXTREME MEASURES. (FEW WOULD DARE OPENLY DRAW THE NATURAL COMPARISON WITH VIETNAM'S OWN LEADERSHIP, HOWEVER.)

PROGNOSIS: GOOD

113. (C) FEW STORM CLOUDS (OTHER THAN THE DIMINISHING PROSPECT OF SOUTH CHINA SEA CONFLICT) APPEAR ON THE HORIZON IN HANOI'S RELATIONS WITH BEIJING AND TAIPEI. THE PRC'S GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN IS SEEN HERE AS A PLUS, AS IS THE PARTICIPATION OF BEIJING, TAIPEI, AND HANOI IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION FORUM. INCREASED FLOWS INTO VIETNAM OF CHINESE TOURISTS, BUSINESSPEOPLE, AND INVESTORS AND EXCHANGES OF OFFICIALS (OR NON-OFFICIALS, AS THE CASE MAY BE WITH TAIWAN) NOT ONLY IMPROVE VIETNAMESE BILATERAL TIES WITH EACH BUT ALSO BUTTRESS THE OVERALL TREND IN VIETNAMESE FOREIGN POLICY SINCE 1990 OF DIVERSIFICATION AND MULTILATERALIZATION. BUT WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT THE VIETNAMESE TO LET DOWN THEIR GUARD ENTIRELY OVER THE LONG-TERM ASPIRATIONS OR DESIGNS OF THEIR LOOMING NEIGHBOR TO THE NORTH.
BURGHARDT

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